**Developmental milestones for high school students**

High school students find themselves caught between childhood and adulthood. As they mature throughout the four years of high school, they experience contradictory impulses. While their self-esteem is increasing, they have a tendency to engage in risk-taking behaviors that can be dangerous to themselves and others. As high school students search for the “real me” and an adult identity, there is an increasing integration of varied self perceptions into a more complex sense of self.

Most students in high school should be in the *formal operations stage* or transitioning from *concrete operations* into *formal operations* as defined by Jean Piaget. The formal operations stage is characterized by the ability to apply logical reasoning to abstract ideas as well as concrete objects and situations. Emerging abilities at this stage are essential for advanced reasoning in math and science. Some examples of cognitive development include the following:

* Logical reasoning about abstract, hypothetical, and contrary-to-fact ideas
* Proportional reasoning
* Formulation of multiple hypotheses
* Separation and control of variables
* Idealism

**(We could talk about ZPD here if we want, but we’re looking at pleasure reading which in some or most cases probably falls below the ZPD.)**

In regards to psychosocial development, Erikson’s places high school students in the *identity versus role confusion stage*, in which adolescents ponder the roles they will play in the adult world. As they eventually achieve a sense of identity, these same students move into the *intimacy versus isolation stage* in which they are either willing to make sacrifices or compromises for the sake of long-term commitments to others or otherwise suffer a sense of isolation.

Ormrod, Jeanne E. 2011. *Educational Psychology: Developing Learners*, 7th edition. Pearson Education, Inc.: Boston.